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Letter dated 9 February 2009 from the Permanent Representatives of South Africa and Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Missions of South Africa and Switzerland to the United Nations present their compliments to the Secretary-General and have the honour to transmit the attached letter from Pam Yako, Director-General of Water Affairs and Forestry of South Africa and Bruno Oberle, head of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, and the enclosed final report of the Durban Workshop entitled "Forest governance and decentralization in Africa" (see annex).

In the light of the importance of the report and its relevance to the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests, we would appreciate it if the present letter and its annex were issued as a document of the eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

(*Signed*) Dumisani **Kumalo**
Permanent Representative of South Africa
to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Peter **Mauer**
Permanent Representative of Switzerland
to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 9 February 2009 from the Permanent Representatives of South Africa and Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to inform you that the international Workshop on Forest Governance and Decentralization in Africa (the Durban Workshop) has taken place in Durban, South Africa from 8 to 11 April 2008. The Durban Workshop was announced at the closing plenary of the seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests by the Governments of South Africa and Switzerland as a country-led initiative in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

The specific objectives of the Workshop were as follows:

- To distil and share lessons learned from the experiences of African countries, including from regional initiatives, in their implementation of decentralization and broader governance reforms in the forest sector
- To facilitate broader, shared understanding of key trends and issues and sharing of lessons and workable approaches, especially as they relate to poverty reduction and sustainable forest management, including forest conservation
- To strengthen cooperation and to enhance partnerships among countries and key stakeholders in addressing common challenges
- To recommend approaches for strengthening policies, institutions and practices of decentralized forest governance systems to reduce the gap between theory and practice

A total of 187 participants from 34 African countries and 11 participants from other countries representing various Government organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector participated in the Workshop.

The final report (see enclosure) captures the highlights of the deliberations undertaken during the Durban Workshop. It will be an important input to the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests at its eighth session, in April 2009.

(*Signed*) Pam **Yako**
Director-General
Water Affairs and Forestry
South Africa

(*Signed*) Bruno **Oberle**
Director, Federal Office for
the Environment of Switzerland

Enclosure

FOREST GOVERNANCE AND DECENTRALIZATION IN AFRICA

REPORT OF A WORKSHOP CO-ORGANIZED BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF SOUTH AFRICA AND SWITZERLAND
"The Durban Workshop"

8-11 APRIL 2008
DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

Summary

Governance reform initiatives including administrative and political decentralization accompanied the rebirth of democracy in parts of Africa in the 1990s. Many countries embarked on decentralization in response to demands for better management of natural resources, including forests, and for more equitable sharing of benefits derived from them. These governance reform and decentralization processes have taken various forms and are proceeding at different paces and stages of implementation.

While these reforms have created real opportunities, putting democratic decentralization into practice for more sustainable forest management and equitable distribution of benefits remains a major challenge. Gains are often undermined by the dearth of mechanisms to track progress and exchange lessons to inform action and by the absence of a framework to value and capitalize forest resources under decentralized management. Inadequate technical competencies and lack of funding and incentives constrain effective implementation on the ground. Protected area conservation and landscape management approaches premised on large-scale (eco-regional), state-managed, command-and-control principles and practices commonly employed in Africa also often run counter to decentralized resource governance.

Increased trade, investment and financial flows into and out of Africa add a layer of complexity to the implementation of decentralization and governance reforms. These issues and challenges are likely to take even greater significance in the context of current discussions on reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation in the international climate change debate.

The Durban Workshop brought together diverse stakeholders, policy makers and international experts from all over Africa and from other regions. Participants shared experiences and explored opportunities to generate concrete gains from governance reforms and decentralized forest management against the backdrop of a range of global, regional and local contexts. Presentations and discussions were organized around three central themes: (1) Decentralized forest management and livelihoods; (2) Conservation, sustainable forest management and forest governance; and (3) International trade, finance and forest sector governance reform. Participants identified several issues in need of attention and offered recommendations for the consideration of countries and the United Nations Forum on Forests.

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I. Introduction and background

1. The decade of the 1990s saw the rebirth of democracy in parts of Africa, and with it the initiation of different governance reform initiatives, notably processes of administrative and political decentralization. Many countries embarked on decentralization in response to demands for better management of natural resources, including forests, and for more equitable sharing of benefits derived from them. Forest governance reform and decentralization in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have taken various forms and are proceeding at difference paces and are at various stages of implementation.

2. In Africa, a host of organizations, initiatives and policy instruments suggest an ongoing commitment to the principles and strategies of democratic decentralization. While policy reforms and ongoing initiatives have created real opportunities, putting democratic decentralization into practice for more equitable distribution of benefits and more sustainable forest management continues to be a challenge.

3. The Food & Agricultural Organization's report on the State of the World's Forest, 2007, estimated forest area for Africa in 2005 as 635 million hectares, representing approximately 16% of global forest area. According to the report the rate of forest cover loss in Africa seems to be slowing slightly, but on the whole it remains high and the extent of other wooded land is also declining. Considering the importance of forestry in the region, specifically in terms of livelihoods and poverty reduction, these losses are a real concern. The role of governance and decentralization as a tool to assist African countries in addressing these issues; the challenges faced by countries relating to governance and decentralization; and the necessity to realize opportunities created by decentralization are some of the issues that warrant further discussion and motivated the International Workshop on Forest Governance and Decentralization in Africa in Durban, South Africa.

4. The goal of the Workshop was to bring together diverse stakeholders, policy makers and international experts to share experiences and explore opportunities for generating concrete gains from governance reforms and decentralized forest management. The workshop built on the 2004 Interlaken Workshop on Forest Decentralization in Federal Systems hosted by the Governments of Switzerland and Indonesia, and the 2006 Yogyakarta Workshop on Forest Governance and Decentralization in Asia and the Pacific hosted by the Government of Indonesia and supported by Switzerland. The Interlaken Workshop had been organized as a country-led initiative in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), and the Yogyakarta Workshop as an activity within the Asia Forest Partnership. The Governments of South Africa and Switzerland organized and co-hosted the Workshop on Forest Governance and Decentralization in Africa, also as a country-led initiative in support of the UNFF from 8 to 11 April 2008, in Durban, South Africa. Technical support for the Durban Workshop was provided by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and Intercooperation (Switzerland). The Workshop was cosponsored by the Governments of Finland, Germany, Norway, United Kingdom and the United States of America as well as the South African Forestry Company Limited (SAFCOL), SAPPI, MONDI and the eThikwini Metropolitan Council. Intercooperation organized logistical arrangements for the workshop.

5. The objectives of the Workshop on Forest Governance and Decentralization in Africa were:

- To distil and share lessons learned from experiences of African countries, including from regional initiatives, in their implementation of decentralization and broader governance reforms in the forest sector;

- To facilitate broader, shared understanding of key trends and issues and sharing of lessons and workable approaches, especially as they relate to poverty reduction and sustainable forest management, including forest conservation;

- To strengthen cooperation and to enhance partnerships among countries and key stakeholders in addressing common challenges; and

- To recommend approaches for strengthening policies, institutions and practices of decentralized forest governance systems to reduce the gap between theory and practice.

6. Expected outcomes from the workshop included the generation of common understanding of concepts and practice of decentralization in the context of forest governance in Africa. The workshop was also expected to identify opportunities for coordinated policy responses, capacity building and implementation of best practices, instruments for improved decentralization to the local level, and strategies for overcoming constraints to effective decentralization and sustainable forest management at different levels. As a country-led initiative, the workshop was also expected to contribute to strengthening the regional component of the UNFF in Africa and to provide inputs to the UNFF process.

7. A total of 187 participants from 34 African countries and 11 participants from other countries representing various government organizations, civil society organizations and private sector participated in the Workshop.

8. This Final Report captures the highlights of the deliberations undertaken during the Workshop on Forest Governance and Decentralization in Africa.

II. Overview of sessions

Workshop themes

9. The Workshop consisted of presentations, panel discussions, working group sessions and field visits organized around three major themes: 1. Decentralized Forest Management and Livelihoods; 2. Decentralization, Conservation and Sustainable Forest Management; 3. International Trade, Finance and Investment in Forest Governance Reform.

10. The three themes served as a way of loosely clustering and organizing presentations and discussions and were meant to be porous, allowing for recurrent issues and ideas to surface and flow across thematic boundaries.

Field trip highlights

11. Field trips to nearby provinces were organized as an integral part of the workshop to facilitate common understanding about thematic issues and to facilitate networking and communication among participants. Each of the three field trips was designed to provide the participants exposure to the South African context and the specific cases that illustrate practical issues and implementation challenges under each theme.

Theme 1 field trip 1: Decentralized forest management and livelihoods

12. The field trip focused on the history of forest tenure reforms in South Africa and their continuing effects on rural livelihoods. In 1994 the first democratic government of South Africa inherited a state deeply divided by the effects of 300 years of colonialism and apartheid. The black majority composing 80% of the population was effectively excluded from land ownership. This historical legacy has continuing important consequences on access to and control over forest resources in the country.

South Africa has put in place two primary mechanisms for land transfer to local communities: (1) restitution that ensures that persons or communities dispossessed of property after 19 June 1913, as a result of past racially discriminatory laws and practices, are restored to such property or receive just and equitable redress; and (2) redistribution of privately owned and public land. The government has also set a target for the transfer of 30% of white-owned agricultural land to black owners by 2015. Through the land tenure reform process, the Department of Land Affairs has purchased land from private owners and plantation companies and returned them to communities.

13. The field trip to the Ixopo and Umzumbe Districts illustrated some of the successes and challenges faced by communities and smallholders in securing land rights and turning their newly acquired tenure rights into real economic benefits. The field trip also highlighted the role of commercial plantations and government departments, the dynamics *of* their interactions with local communities and challenges in assisting local communities with management following the land transfer.

Theme 2 field trip: Decentralization, conservation and sustainable forest management

14. The field trip centered on the governance of water for use by forestry and other sectors. Issues highlighted included the relationship between water and trees, the role of research in setting policy targets for water regulation and allocation; the appropriate degree of decentralization of forest and catchment governance and management; and instruments for cross-sectoral governance of water. Long term research and monitoring have conclusively established the negative effects on

streamflow of tall, dense, evergreen canopies and deep rooted trees characteristic of commercial forest plantations in South Africa.

15. The field trip showcased the Working for Water Programme, a government-supported programme implementing payments for environmental services. Initiated in 1995, the programme is aimed at eliminating invasive alien tree species from catchment areas to minimize negative effect on streamflow. In the course of its implementation the programme has cleared 10 000 km^2 of alien invasive species and provided jobs and training to around 20,000 people from marginalized sectors of the economy.

Theme 3 field trip: International trade, finance and investment in forest governance reform

16. The field trip was designed to illustrate international trade and its links with local communities and forests, the impacts of international governance instruments, particularly certification, on and use practice and the social and ecological effects of these practices.

17. Regarded as a constructive means of reassuring consumers that the marketed timber has come from sustainably managed sources, certification systems adopt varying standards. The most widely recognized system, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) system based on independent, third party certification requires an assessment of environmental, social and economic sustainability of forest management against 10 international principles and criteria.

18. The field trip to the Richmond area in KwaZuiu Natal Province included interactions with a community managing land recovered from a FSC certified plantation company under the government's Land restitution program; and visits to the company's certified plantations and a separate pulp processing facility oriented entirely for export.

Comments and observations from field trips

19. Participants offered the following general comments and observations based on background information provided and discussions during the field trips:

- The outcome of the Restitution process (land claims process), introduced in South Africa in 1994, was that land was restored to people or communities and in turn this resulted in the proliferation of community-company partnership arrangements where commercial plantations were involved. Benefits derived by communities from these partnership arrangements include access to cash (including for women), training in forestry, employment, and guaranteed market for timber while benefits to companies include access to labor, land and guaranteed, and in some instances, inexpensive supply of wood.

- Communities have benefited from such partnership arrangements, although community benefits have been less than initially expected.

- Community efforts towards value addition and livelihood diversification have been generally constrained by: inadequate technical capacity; lack of financial resources; limited access to credit, funding sources and marketing channels.

- The size of the land given to communities for plantation management is an important factor in the economic viability of community plantations.

- Inadequate company support in community capacity building and attempts to access alternative sources of funding and development assistance can fuel tensions between communities and partner companies. It can also perpetuate community dependency and stymie efforts to diversify their livelihood and partnership options.

- Resources for the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs typically get only a modest share of company operational budgets, and are often inadequate to meet partner community needs and expectations.

- Certification does not necessarily guarantee that ecological and social aspects are fully dealt with. Technical plantation management issues tend to be fairly well covered, while issues of social equity and historical imbalances can remain unaddressed.

- Excessive water use and streamflow reduction from monoculture plantations of exotic species and the proliferation of invasive species are issues of concern for landscape management and involve trade-offs among stakeholders. Research can help clarify the nature and magnitude of these trade-offs though decisions on management objectives of any given landscape are ultimately and inherently social and political choices.

- "Success" of research in effecting governance reforms is facilitated by the social legitimacy and transparency of decision-making processes and the ability to treat governance reforms as experiments rather than facts, to be perfected over many years of implementation, observation and modification.

20. The following were suggested for consideration by the Government of South Africa as possible measures to address identified issues:

- Ensure that land transferred to communities is sufficiently productive and large enough to serve as economically viable production units.

- Land grants need to be accompanied by necessary support for skills development, access to financial resources, markets and technical assistance.

- Support regional exchange of knowledge and policy experience on water governance in the forestry sector. This could facilitate broader learning from South Africa's experience, regional policy harmonization and joint learning.

- Experiment with innovative means to leverage science in support of policy.

- Apply the principle of "subsidiarity" (rather than decentralization per se) to the governance of environmental services: (i) match the level of decision-making to the scale of the resource being managed; (ii) ensure decentralized functions are supported by adequate financial resources; and (iii) leverage national funds for policy-oriented research.

- Support equitable decision processes and cross-sectoral checks and balances for the governance of environmental services, while also sticking to minimize the bureaucratic steps and transaction costs of such procedures.

- Ensure that social and ecological issues are addressed in the national certification standard under development and facilitate their incorporation in FSC standards.

III. Thematic presentations and discussions

Theme 1: Decentralized forest management and livelihoods

21. The keynote presentation in this theme argued that decentralized forest governance is not inherently superior to centralized governance systems, but can be a means to promote local democracy. If minimum rules of use aimed at protecting essential ecological functions and protecting livelihood and economic values can be set, then the remainder of decisions over forest management and use can be at the discretion of democratically elected local representatives.

22. Discussions and subsequent presentations raised a series of issues that echo previous discussions on decentralization and governance globally (Interlaken Workshop, 2004) and in Asia-Pacific (Yogyakarta Workshop, 2006). Issues included: increasing conflict, cronyism, corruption, lack of accountability and transparency, social inequities, and elite capture. The significance of local variations and diversity was also widely noted. As in other workshops on decentralization, there was a refrain that "one size does *not* fit all".

23. The existence of overlapping customary and statutory rights is a recurrent issue, fomenting contestation and conflict, some serious, some overt, others hidden. There were expectations that decentralization and devolution of rights can lead to poverty reduction, as has been reported in parts of the Congo Basin.

24. The definition of decentralization remained a subject of controversy. Some argued that only cases where a higher level of governmental devolves authority and power to a lower level of government should be considered decentralization. Within this view was an emphasis on democracy, in the sense of formal election of representatives, as a crucial mechanism for accountability. Others consider devolution to communities and other non-elected groups to be legitimate decentralization; still others consider privatization to be legitimate decentralization. Questions were also raised on specifics of governance mechanisms.

25. In some cases, governments devolve authority or rights with one hand and take it away with the other (in the sense of new regulations that render earlier regulations moot or toothless), or they use tax and other incentives to encourage more sustainable natural resource management.

26. Gender was identified as an important cross-cutting issue but one which tends to be widely ignored in decentralization implementation. Women's voices and concerns tend not to be heard (particularly in formal governance settings), benefits tend not to be distributed equitably to them, and their needs and interests appear to be widely ignored, despite their normally constituting half (or more) of the local populations.

Theme 2: Decentralization, conservation and sustainable forest management

27. The keynote presentation under this theme questioned the concept of democratic decentralization and its narrow focus on state, powers and subsidiarity. Empirical evidence points to limited cases of success and varied applications of subsidiarity principles. There is overwhelming evidence of the elusive nature of "democratic decentralization" in conservation schemes and the "fugitive" nature of power in decentralization processes. Power, a central issue in decentralization, has the propensity to operate beyond the law and its scope of legitimating structures.

28. Both conservation discourse and decentralization theory employ normative explanatory frameworks largely borrowed from outside, that render invisible the role, legitimacy and innovative potential of local actors. While conservation discourse is primarily concerned with territories, decentralization theory is obsessed with powers and politics. This leads to overemphasis on political explanatory factors and de-emphasis of the role played by the web of embedded institutions and informal networks through which local meanings and other capabilities (other than power) shape uncertain outcomes. This has also rendered invisible numerous cases of local resource management and political "space taking", cases of de facto decentralization.

29. "Democratic conservation" was proposed as a more appropriate approach, i.e., the exercise of democracy in decision-making about protection and use of land and biodiversity resources. Citizenship, whether based on blood rights or civil or territorial rights, is central to the exercise of democratic decision-making and resource allocation. In many African societies, the lineage or the clan (a group of lineages descending from a common and putative ancestor) are the (often invisible) decision-making unit on matters of land and natural resources, and thus critical to tenure regimes.

30. Customary, or community based tenure remains the de facto dominant tenure type in almost all sub-Saharan countries. Yet tenure policies in many countries tend to not recognize indigenous tenure or are aimed at its replacement. Externally imposed conservation models are insensitive to the reality of embedded tenure and have not satisfactorily addressed issues of indigenous rights.

31. Community Based Forest Management (CBFM) has been promoted widely and is spreading rapidly in many countries in Africa. Since many of the largest areas of unreserved woodlands are in some of the poorest and most remote areas, CBFM represents an important strategy in supporting livelihoods where economic opportunities are severely limited.

32. While forest legislation in many countries provides important incentives to rural communities to manage forests on a sustainable basis, there is little evidence that the legal transfer of areas of forest has been accompanied by tangible local economic returns from sustainable forest harvesting and utilization. Livelihood outcomes and impacts vary in different locations and evidence of the link between governance reforms and forest sustainability is highly variable both within and between countries that have enacted reforms.

Theme 3: International trade, finance and investment in forest governance reform

33. The keynote presentation under this theme highlighted a new, emerging pattern of trade in forest products and investment flows in Africa and its implications for governance reform in the region. The dysfunction of public institutions in many countries was identified as one important stumbling block to reform aimed at improving governance and sustainable forest management. Proposed solutions to this issue have focused on regulation, which is premised on effective law enforcement, or on privatization as an alternative to governments viewed as corrupt.

34. Recent institutional innovations, such as third party certification and the use of independent observers, and provisions in international conventions present countries with a broader, range of approaches that could be employed to promote forest governance reform, beyond regulation or privatization. There are indications that these arrangements may be similarly applied at the international level in dealing with such trans-boundary issues as international trade in forest products and climate change.

35. Cases presented illustrated how third party certification and the concept of "free and prior informed consent" are playing out on the ground and impacting on local people and forest resources. Other presentations focused on fiscal reform, changing dynamics of forest products trade and investment and how these impact different segments of the forest sector. Presentations on international forest products trade networks and climate change noted the opportunities global trade and new market instruments are creating, but also underscored the potential pitfalls for countries in the region.

36. Africa's remaining forest resources are under heavy pressure. Much of the harvesting is illegal, often undertaken with the complicity of highly placed staff of local and national government institutions, village leaders, logging operators and politically powerful individuals. African governments have expressed their intention to address issues of law enforcement, governance and trade in the Africa Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (AFLEG) Declaration of 2003.

37. Discussions centered around the impacts of trade and regulatory policy responses on forests and forest-dependent people, on fiscal reform, including its design and implementation, and on issues related to reinvestment in the forest sector by beneficiaries following decentralization. A major concern was on how local communities are affected and how they can engage with fiscal and governance reforms to their benefit. The issue of corruption at all levels was identified as important and in need of critical action, especially at the highest levels.

IV. Lessons and conclusions

38. The lessons and conclusions that emerged from the presentations and group discussions can be clustered into five broad categories: governance and democracy; benefits to local people; strengthening capacities and institutions; forest finance and trade; and governance and climate change.

Governance and democracy

39. There is still a long way to go in the process of genuine involvement of local communities in decentralization. That decentralization is a long process needs to be recognized; at the same time, globalization, climate change and powerful new business regimes make it necessary to accelerate the process. Positive results can take a long time to achieve but much progress can be made in a short time where there is a clear and strong political will.

40. The degree to which devolved rights are secure remains an important and recurring problem. In many cases higher levels of government retain the right to withdraw transferred powers, or use delaying tactics such as excessive bureaucracy.

41. The process of evaluating the social, economic and ecological impacts of decentralization remains difficult. There is widespread agreement that tools at hand are inadequate. Yet there have also been some successes in intermediate evaluations. And there is some evidence that decentralization can strengthen stewardship, such as in Kenya and Uganda.

42. There is an expressed need to strengthen democracy in decentralization. Existing class, caste, ethnic and gender hierarchies in many locations hinder democratic decentralization and favor; elite capture of benefits and decision-making power. In some cases, elections work as accountability mechanisms, though not everywhere.

43. A range of factors continue to hamper effective decentralization and create a generally poor climate for governance reform in Africa's forests. These include lack of human and operational resources, gaps in knowledge among key staff of local government and other relevant agencies of the legal provisions of land and forestry legislation; limited data and outdated assessments of the extent and condition of forest resources; and significant undervaluation of the real contribution of the forest sector to the national economy. The roles of central and local governments with regard to the collection and disbursement of forest revenues is also often unclear of contested and leads to great inefficiencies.

Economic benefits to local people

44. Local people only receive minor revenues from devolved resources. This was the clearest and most consistent lesson. Although devolution and decentralised approaches to forest management take various forms, in general, villagers receive rights to areas with less valuable forests or only for minor resources. Decisions on valuable assets such as timber and wildlife remain mostly with the State and with large private interests.

45. Ensuring tenure to land for local communities is an important step in improving livelihoods, but tenure alone has been found to be insufficient. Other rights are needed, including right of representation, access to finance for investment and access to markets.

46. The contributions of forests to multiple social, political and economic scales of income and subsistence must be better understood. Specifically, the values from forests and to whom they accrue require particular attention. Cronyism can negate the benefits for local people. Still, even partial decentralization can result in some benefits for local people.

Strengthening capacities and institutions

47. Institutional factors mediate livelihood and sustainability outcomes from decentralization and governance reforms. Rules regarding forest use, the degree to which they are enforced and the capacity of key actors to frame, implement and renegotiate rules are critically important.

48. Governance failures have undermined attempts by local communities to claim their rights regarding the ownership and management of forests in accordance with prevailing legislation. Capacity constraints of key government agencies and support institutions also contribute to weak, ineffective and inefficient service delivery at the local level.

49. Political connectedness is an important variable influencing reform outcomes for the poor. Local elites, NGOs and other special interests tend to dominate local decision making processes regarding the de facto assignment of rights, which tend to undermine outcomes for the rural poor.

50. Strengthening local people's capacities to organize, develop and implement rules, and sanction offenders plays an important role in their overall empowerment process and can enhance their share of benefits *from* forest decentralization. Partnerships between the state and civil society organizations can help strengthen and foster sustainable local resource management units.

51. Institutional capacities can be eroded by inappropriate or insufficient input. Withdrawal of external support, as in Zimbabwe, can lead to stagnation and erosion of capacities and knowledge already developed and reversal of previous achievements.

Forest finance and trade

52. Due to lack of sufficient internal fiscal accounting and downward accountability, investments by local authorities are not always responsive to local needs and aspirations. Furthermore, much privatization that does not serve local communities takes place in the name of decentralization.

53. Forest derived resource taxes and levies can be important sources of revenue though the realized amounts and efficiency of collection tend to be poor. Building financial capacity at the different levels of local government is necessary in order to facilitate efficient management of revenues from fiscal decentralization.

54. National and regional forest law enforcement and governance initiatives are hampered by limited political will to implement agreements. Efforts to improve forest law enforcement, governance and trade (FLEGT) are more likely to succeed if regional and sub-regional institutions take the lead in coordinating cooperation activities, mindful of the controversy surrounding the concept of "illegality". Efforts should apply to a broader set of issues than illegal logging and should avoid overly detrimental or discriminatory effects on local people. However, the nature and modes of operation of formal and informal trading networks active in forest products trade in Africa and across the globe pose a major challenge to the effective implementation of FLEGT.

55. The changing dynamics of forest products trade in Africa is reshaping the structure of the forest sector in many countries and the terms of integration of forest dependent households and communities into the international forest products trade. The private sector can wield considerable influence both locally and nationally, particularly where public services are weak and concessionaires hold substantial bargaining power as the only source of social services. While market-based instruments and innovative non-regulatory approaches can raise the bar on corporate business practice, they are by nature voluntary; non-binding instruments. They still require state action to exact compliance.

56. Voluntary instruments and state action can be viewed as complementary tools for forest governance reform. To be effective, Free and Prior Informed Consent (EPIC), certification and other similar approaches require access to information, open channels of negotiation, and state support to plug loopholes and reconcile legal contradictions.

Governance and climate change

57. With deforestation and forest degradation accounting for about 25% of annual greenhouse gas emissions worldwide, forests and forest policies have especially attracted interest in climate change discussions. Forests and how they are managed would have to be among the key elements of a comprehensive global response to climate change.

58. Developing countries could potentially benefit from the evolving carbon market and through project support from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). However, heavy initial investment, high levels of expertise needed and the requirement of clear property rights for

investment make it very difficult for decentralized government bodies, smaller forest owners and forest communities to participate and realize the potential benefits film the evolving CDM market.

59. A reputation of poor governance and corruption inhibits carbon sequestration finance and investment from flowing to countries that could otherwise benefit from these flows. According to an Indonesian forestry official, "These causes of deforestation and forest degradation are actually only symptoms, while the underlying cause is indeed poor governance. If workable structures and acceptable levels of trust can be developed, these can leverage new resources related to the changing global policy context."

V. Recommendations to countries

60. Within each thematic sub-group participants identified a range of important issues, lessons and possible measures to deal with some of the key issues. Results of sub-group deliberations were reported in plenary for broader discussion and comment. The ideas and proposals were further distilled within thematic sub-groups into a set of draft recommendations for action. The sub-group draft recommendations were then discussed, amended and finally adopted in plenary as the following final recommendations from the workshop.

Theme 1: Decentralized forest management and livelihoods

61. **Recognizing that**:

- Decentralization should be a long term strategic governance change.

- Its implementation must take into account socio-cultural, environmental and political diversity.

- Government, industry and civil society have responsibilities in decentralization.

Improve forest governance

- Build in continual self-monitoring, third party monitoring and evaluation systems. Within a given set of minimum rules or standards for forest management and use, transfer resources; and decisions to local authorities and communities and/or their representatives to establish tenure and broader rights (representation, recourse, procedural rights) and ensure that such transfers and rights are recognized in the legal system.

- Encourage public debate over which resources should be private.

- Facilitates the emergence of networks capable of influencing policy dialogue, such as associations of local authorities, unions and federations.

Strengthen democracy

- Empower local authorities who are downwardly accountable to the people, in order to strengthen local democracy, citizenship, rights and responsibilities in people's relationship with the State, while supporting an active public domain.

- Develop mechanisms (such as affirmative action) to counter-balance existing inequities in gender, religion, ethnicity, caste, and class.

- Develop mechanisms for managing conflicts among diverse stakeholders, including skill building, self-analysis, facilitation, negotiation, and conflict resolution.

Strengthen capacity

- Provide civic education and access to information to enable local authorities and local people to know, demand and protect their legal rights and responsibilities.

- Review formal education programs and make appropriate revisions to the technical and tertiary forestry curricula to include indigenous knowledge.

- Support forestry research in the social and natural sciences in order to produce knowledge, training and education, with attention to the application and appropriate dissemination of all findings in local languages.

- Reinforce organizational structures at local level for resource management by enhancing technical, empowerment, organizational and revenue generating capabilities, and providing related budgetary support.

- Strengthen mechanisms of collective communication and negotiation — through the institution of regular meetings, newsletters, increased interaction — to enhance partnerships between communities and the levels of government and society.

Ensure economic benefits to local people

- Within a given set of minimum rules or standards for forest management and use, grant and guarantee local people access that will provide direct economic benefits to them, in the interest of improved local management.

- Integrate equitable mechanisms to enhance local livelihoods in all forest policy (taxation, licensing, etc.), including devolving control over lucrative timber and non-timber forest resources.

Improve markets and trade

- Support equitable market access, including market linkages and development.

- Support communities to add value to forest resources and establish viable and sustainable businesses.

- Expand attention and market opportunities beyond timber to non-timber forest products whose use may be limited to disadvantaged segments of society.

- Create r nisms to protect people from the vagaries of markets.

Theme 2: Conservation, sustainable forest management and forest governance

Support democratic forest conservation and management initiatives

- Enable communities to express their choices and defend their rights, interests and values.

- Devote meaningful financial and human resources to strengthen the capacity of all actors, especially local communities, in all areas of democratic governance of natural resources.

- Organize and implement open fora for deliberation over natural resource management and decentralization decisions.

- Foster incremental approaches to conservation where the government supports and facilitates rather than dictates to local communities.

Allocate decision-making, roles and responsibilities to the lowest appropriate level

- Support amore strategic selection of priority conservation functions, support them better, and devolve others to customary forms of management.

- National policy should provide the framework for decision making, rather than attempt to centralize detailed decisions which can be effectively made at the local level.

- Ensure decentralized functions are supported by adequate financial and human resources.

Implement national and international policies on gender, minorities and indigenous groups

- Focus implementation at the level of decision-making, budgets, tenure rights, and legal quotas.

- Strengthen mutual accountability in the management of resources of both local and national concern.

Ensure that comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems accompany governance innovations

- Better track livelihood and sustainability outcomes in sustainable forest management.

- Facilitate adaptive learning and governance.

Consider the true value of forest and landscape goods and services in decision-making

- Develop and support natural resource management decision-making based on the true value of forest and landscape goods and services.

- Take into consideration the diversity of interests and values attached to these goods and services.

- Leverage national funds for multi-disciplinary, policy-oriented research to provide balanced, policy relevant information.

- Experiment with innovative means to leverage science in support of policy, particularly in the identification and governance of trade-offs in multi-stakeholder forest landscapes. This should include mechanisms for multi-stakeholder and multisectoral decision-making in responding to research findings.

- Support equitable decision processes and cross-sectoral checks and balances for the governance of environmental services, while also seeking to minimize the bureaucratic steps and "transaction costs" of such procedures.

Support local communities' efforts to reduce capture of resources by local and external elites

- Ensure that restrictions on rights in protected areas are applied equally to all actors or for the benefit of customary rights.

Support and develop regional cooperation on shared resources and challenges

- Support harmonization of policies.

- Avoid turning governance successes in one country into governance challenges in other countries.

Theme 3: International trade, finance, climate change and forest sector governance reform

Improve trade, investment and marketing channels

- Strengthen policies using market elements such as certification, voluntary partnership agreements and FLEGT, to extend their impact to new and emerging markets globally.

- Rethink approaches to regulation and incentives for corporate behavioural reform, based on understanding of the operations and social norms governing transnational trading networks.

- Remove barriers to market entry to enable communities to access markets and opportunities and profit from forest-based economic activities.

- Pursue holistic anti-corruption efforts at different levels, with greater focus on high-level corruption; and with strong audit and accountability mechanisms built in.

- Clarify and secure rights and tenure over land and forest resources and put in place mechanisms to ensure that these rights are enforced and protected, paying particular attention to gender issues.

- Ensure that potential benefits from future agreements aiming at mitigating climate change from forestry go in priority to local stakeholders involved in land-use changes and forest use.

Improve equity in finance

- Facilitate reinvestment of forest revenues to enhance forest productive capacities and social welfare infrastructure for the benefit of women and men in forest communities.

- Ensure that market-based payments for forest ecosystem services and mechanisms for their implementation include strong elements of distributional equity and accountability.

- Promote regional cooperation and investment on value addition of forest product, retain value at local level and promote sustainable trade of forest products.

- Design a national accounting mechanism for capturing the full value of forest products and services with the view to raising the profile of forests in the local and national economy.

- Create incentive schemes for those implementing certified concessions. Such schemes could be linked with an international mechanism to compensate governments for providing those incentives.

Promote appropriate responses to climate change

- Ensure that forest sector actors actively contribute to the development of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) post-2012 agenda that would address the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation in a manner beneficial for local stakeholders, and promote flexibility in existing mechanisms.

- At a national level, seek spaces for dialogue among public sector, private sector and civil society actors with the aim to develop norms and standards that allow the forest sector to meaningfully apply adaptation and mitigation options (including REDD and carbon sequestration through assisted regeneration and forest restoration) in a manner that promotes local employment, poverty alleviation and sustainable and equitable resource use.

- Promote pilot actions and design suitable adaptation and mitigation options, with focus on rights, monitoring arrangements and implementation standards.

VI. Recommendations to the United Nations Forum on Forests

62. The United Nations Forum on Forests may wish to consider urging countries to take the following actions based on the recommendations from the workshop:

- Promote the decentralization of forest management, taking into account the points of view of all relevant stakeholders, providing support for their empowerment, stimulating their participation in forest management decision-making processes at all levels, and recognizing that in decentralization, one size does not fit all.

- Support broad-based participation and efforts to clarify and secure ownership rights, and the enforcement and protection of those rights, taking into account the traditions of the local and indigenous communities.

- Eliminate barriers and improve the access of local communities to markets, as well as to the revenue generated by the sustainable management of forests, including through better distribution of fiscal resources.

- Promote the sustainable management of forests and enhanced benefits derived from them and judicious use of market tools such as transfer payments and voluntary partnership agreements.

- Enhance the transparency of governmental policies and actions directed to forest law enforcement, and pursue holistic anti-corruption efforts at all levels.

- Ensure that forest sector actors actively contribute to setting the post-2012 agenda of the UNFCCC, particularly on the role that forests might play in the new regime at the level of mitigation and adaptation.

- Promote national dialogue involving all relevant stakeholders with the view to developing norms and standards to facilitate benefits to local people and to encouraging the forest sector to make the best use possible of the mechanisms provided by the UNFCCC.

- Take a proactive rote in setting up trust and high standards of sector governance to make best use of new means of implementation.

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United Nations Forum on Forests
Eighth session
New York, 20 April-1 May 2009
Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Means of implementation for sustainable forest management: decision on a voluntary global financial mechanism, a portfolio approach and a forest financing framework

Note verbale dated 6 February 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Suriname to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Suriname to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to submit herewith the report of the meeting held in Paramaribo from 8 to 12 September 2008 entitled "Summary of the conclusions and recommendations of the international expert meeting on financing for sustainable forest management: the Paramaribo dialogue" (see annex).

The meeting, hosted by the Government of the Republic of Suriname, was a country-led initiative in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests, co-sponsored by the Governments of the Netherlands and the United States of America. It gathered 227 participants, including international experts from all regions of the world, non-governmental organizations and major groups.

The Permanent Mission of Suriname to the United Nations requests that the Secretary-General include the report among the documentation for the eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, to be held from 20 April to 1 May 2009.

* E/CN.18/2009/1.

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Annex to the letter dated 6 February 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Suriname to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Summary of the conclusions and recommendations of the International expert meeting on financing for sustainable forest management: the Paramaribo Dialogue
8-12 September 2008
Paramaribo

A country-led initiative in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests

INTRODUCTION

This report presents a summary of conclusions and recommendations from the international expert meeting "Financing for Sustainable Forest Management: The Paramaribo Dialogue", hosted by Suriname as a Country-Led Initiative (CLI) in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). The full Co-Chairs' Summary Report of the CLI can be found at www.clisuriname.com.

The CLI was co-organized by the Republic of Suriname, the Kingdom of The Netherlands and the United States of America, and was supported by the Government of the United Kingdom, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, Conservation International and WWF-Guianas.

The seventh session of the UNFF successfully concluded a Non Legally Binding Instrument (NLBI) on All Types of Forests, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 2007. The seventh session of UNFF also decided "to develop and consider, with a view to adopting at the eighth session of the Forum, a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework for all types of forests, aiming at mobilizing significantly increased, new and additional resources from all sources, based on existing and emerging innovative approaches, also taking into account assessments and reviews of current financial mechanisms, to support the implementation of sustainable forest management, the achievement of the global objectives on forests and the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests".

Against this background and in support of the UNFF process, the objective of the *Paramaribo Dialogue* was to identify opportunities to significantly enhance financing for sustainable forest management. To that end, the meeting brought together finance and forest experts from around the world, shared experiences on mobilizing forest funding and generating revenues, identified existing and emerging public and private

financing sources, and examined the relationship between forest financing and forest-related governance and enabling environments for investment. The meeting also explored models, strategies and institutional arrangements for increased financing through such means as bilateral and multilateral public funding mechanisms, debt reduction, payments for ecosystem services (such as water and carbon), private sector commercial investment and private philanthropy.

The preparation for the CLI was guided by an Advisory Committee chaired by Ambassador Henry Mac-Donald, Permanent Representative of Suriname to the UN, and consisting of The Netherlands, United States of America, Germany, Norway, United Kingdom, South Africa, Suriname, FAO, ITTO, the World Bank, the UNFF Secretariat, Conservation International and Forest Trends. UNFF Bureau members were consulted during the development of the CLI programme. A CLI Suriname Conference Management Team was formed by the President of the Republic of Suriname to coordinate and organize the meeting.

The CLI was officially opened by H.E. Runaldo Ronald Venetiaan, President of the Republic of Suriname. Welcome addresses were delivered by Ambassador Ewald Limon, Chair Presidential Task Force "National CLI Preparations", on behalf of the Republic of Suriname; Mr. Hans Hoogeveen, Chair UNFF-7/Director-General of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, on behalf of the Government of the Netherlands, Ms. Stephanie Caswell, Director of the Office of Ecosystems and Natural Resources Conservation U.S. Department of State, on behalf of the Government of the United States of America and Mr. Boen M. Purnama, Chair UNFF-8/Secretary-General of the Ministry of Forestry, Republic of Indonesia. A summary of the opening addresses during the morning session is attached in Annex I.

The plenary sessions of the CLI were co-chaired by Mr. Cornelis Pigot and Ms. Annette Tjon Sie Fat on behalf of Suriname; Mr. Hans Hoogeveen on behalf of the Netherlands; and Ms. Stephanie Caswell on behalf of the United States. Breakout groups were co-chaired by Mr. Glen Kile (Australia) and Ms. Elise Haber (South Africa), Mr. Carlos Gonzalez (Mexico) and Ms. Stefanie von Scheliha (Germany), Mr. S.P. Yadav (India) and Mr. John Hudson (United Kingdom). The breakout groups were facilitated by Mr. Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, Mr. Rezal Kusumaatmadja and Mr. Jag Maini. Rapporteurs were Ms. Kim van Seeters, Mr. Charles Barber and Amb. Henry Mac-Donald.

The experts at the CLI discussed the issues raised in plenary sessions in three concurrent, interactive breakout groups which met three times over the course of the meeting. The breakout groups were facilitated, and all discussed a common set of questions that were put to them by the meeting co-chairs. Breakout session co-chairs prepared a summary of key points raised in their groups for presentation to plenary.

The following issues were discussed:

- Financing sustainable forest management: Producer, Consumer and Community perspectives;
- Financing from forest ecosystem services;
- Institutional and governance strategies at the national level;
- Institutional and governance strategies at the international level.

This summary report is a compilation of views discussed during the meeting and does not necessarily reflect a consensus among the experts, participating in their personal capacity. Some of the items summarized under the breakout groups are cross-cutting in nature. Therefore, for a full understanding of the discussion, the complete report should be considered in its entirety

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions and recommendations discussed by participants at the CLI, which are more fully addressed in the main body of the CLI report, are presented below. They have been reordered and clustered under sub-headings for the benefit of the reader, but their substantive text remains unchanged.

These conclusions and recommendations are offered as input to the UNFF discussions and negotiations on financing for SFM. They reflect a compilation by the CLI Co-Chairs of views and recommendations offered during the meeting and does not necessarily reflect consensus among participants, who participated in the CLI their personal capacity as experts.

A. Current and Emerging Initiatives and Mechanisms for Financing SFM

- The UNFF is entering a new and mature era, having agreed in 2007 to a Multi-Year Program through 2015 and to the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (NLBI), which the UN General Assembly adopted in December 2007.
- The NLBI is a landmark global agreement achieved after years of negotiation. The agreement builds on the Forest Principles adopted at Rio in 1992, as well as the Johannesburg Plan of Action of 2002, and provides an enhanced framework for national action and international cooperation to achieve sustainable forest management (SFM).
- The UNFF 7 agreed, among other things, to develop and consider, with a view to adopting, a "voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest

financing framework aimed at mobilizing significantly increased new and additional resources from all sources, based on existing and emerging innovative approaches, also taking into account assessments and reviews of current financial mechanisms, to support the objectives on forests and the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests." There is an urgent need for financing for sustainable forest management from all sources.

- Forests are diverse in character and subject to widely varying pressures. The context of forests and forest policies are often country-, Subregion- or ecosystem-specific (e.g. mangroves versus boreal forests or tropical rainforests).

- There is a critical need to tackle the main drivers of deforestation, which in large part lie outside the forest sector.

- Less than half of countries' Poverty Reduction Strategic Papers (PRSPs) even mention forests, and less than a quarter include a coherent cross-sectoral strategy incorporating forests and SFM. Countries should develop coordinated development strategies that address all actions having an impact on forests, and include SFM as a basis for sustainable development.

- A country's investment climate is critical to attracting private sector investment.

- Economic values of forest ecosystems are increasingly recognized, including protection of water, soil, biodiversity, and carbon. Emerging systems for payments for ecosystem services (PES) present important new opportunities for mobilizing SFM financing.

- PES markets are still evolving and not generally well-understood by the forestry community. Improving this communications gap is a key task for mobilizing PES as part of SFM financing.

- PES initiatives will need to be flexible and adapted to diverse national contexts: One size does not fit all.

- Establishing an enabling policy environment for SFM at the national level is a crucial step for countries to take, in order to mobilize and take advantage of emerging PES instruments and opportunities. Key elements of an enabling environment include:

    - Mainstreaming SFM as a core element of development planning and investment discussions and priorities;

    - Strengthening policy coherence among government sectors in order to "speak with one voice" on forest issues in different international fora (e.g. UNFF and UNFCCC);

- Clarifying and securing land tenure – i.e. allocation, ownership and control over forest lands and resources;

- Improving the environment for doing business – particularly for small and medium enterprises – by combating corruption and reducing bureaucratic barriers (i.e. "red tape") to private sector business activity;

- Creating the conditions that allow community-based forest management to flourish, and empowering local and indigenous communities to participate in decision-making about forests and forest policy;

- Strengthening forest law enforcement;

- Reducing perverse incentives that encourage unsustainable forest uses and forest conversion, and develop positive economic incentives (e.g. tax breaks) for SFM.

- Establishing specific provisions to enable PES systems to be established and flourish.

- Forest inventory, forest land use planning, mapping and carbon accounting are all key building blocks for PES, and SFM financing in general.

- Given the critical importance of the legal and governance basis for PES, it may be useful to hold regional or national workshops, building on preparatory research and stakeholder consultation, to identify key legal and governance obstacles and develop recommendations and strategies to overcome these obstacles.

- In developing countries in particular, there is a pressing need for more information on the theory and practice of PES, including examples of PES best practices and success stories.

- Implementing PES requires "up-front" investment in developing capacity, basic information (e.g. maps), etc. ODA can play a catalytic role in this regard.

- PES is a potentially fundamental element of the "portfolio approach", but it may not be applicable to all countries and situations.

- There are significant differences between PES in the national or local context versus international context. Trans-boundary PES initiatives may be more difficult to develop and implement.

- Strategies for PES may include a combination of market-driven voluntary transactions and regulatory approaches.

- In some cases, ecosystem services are viewed as free "public goods", and some are resistant to the idea of paying for them. Others object on ethical grounds to the commoditization of nature. Political and social acceptance of PES is therefore a challenge, along with technical and policy challenges.

- There is considerable uncertainty about how various PES systems would distribute burdens and benefits. Indigenous and local communities in particular, are very concerned that they may not be compensated for their longtime efforts to conserve and sustainably use forests, and may even lose access to their lands and resources in a "PES gold rush" by outsiders.

- It is often difficult to ensure that those who provide particular ecosystem services are the ones who are actually compensated for doing so. Similarly, identifying the users who should pay for those services – and devising practical and feasible ways to get them to pay – is a challenge.

- Independent, voluntary certification standards and systems are one important method for boosting investor confidence in PES projects, but such systems are still in an early stage of development. Many potential investors seek a transparent standard that can verify not only carbon performance, but also performance in meeting biodiversity and social objectives. The market-leading Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) Standard is in the process of developing a verification standard that takes multiple carbon, biodiversity and social benefits into account. Development, testing and application of a holistic standard of this kind will help to build investor confidence.

- The growing focus on reductions in emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) and the renewed concern for forests as a result may provide an important boost for SFM financing efforts, but there are also concerns, for example:

    - The intense focus on REDD may be creating inflated expectations about the financial resources that are likely to be generated for SFM.

    - The focus on forests' carbon ecosystem services may overshadow and crowd out attention to other important forest ecosystem services, such as biodiversity and water.

    - The compressed negotiating schedule under UNFCCC, and the pressure to agree on a REDD system by the end of 2009, before the issues are fully understood, raises concerns for some.

    - The nature of "forest carbon" – whether it is a commodity or a unit of measure to value a service is unclear and has implications for determining who are the providers/owners of carbon.

- Countries and other stakeholders can immediately take advantage of carbon-based PES systems, using the growing voluntary market, while the proposed REDD mechanism under the UNFCCC regime is developed.

B. Institutional and governance strategies at national and international levels for financing for SFM

- High-level national political commitment to SFM is essential for both mobilizing financing and for ensuring the inter-sectoral coordination required to actually implement SFM.

- A key first step that countries can take is to conduct an inventory of their forest resources, including a preliminary assessment of their value.

- Countries can greatly benefit from development of a long-term vision for the sustainable development of their forests and forest lands through a participatory and inter-sectoral process.

- National Forest Programmes and other similar national forest policy frameworks are key vehicles to implement the NLBI, and to catalyze integrated national financing strategies to mobilize and increase financial resources for SFM.

- Good "vertical" as well as "horizontal" coordination among levels of government is also important, especially in countries with federal or decentralized government institutions.

- Establishment of an enabling policy, legal and institutional environment for financing SFM is of critical importance. Key elements of an enabling environment include: securing and clarifying tenure; improving the environment for business start-up and operation; reducing "perverse incentives" and establishing positive incentives for SFM investments; strengthening forest law enforcement; community-based forest management approaches; and creating conditions to allow for payments for ecosystem services.

- Processes for meaningful stakeholder participation are an important basis for financing and implementing SFM. Participation of indigenous and local communities requires attention to their particular cultural and linguistic situations.

- Indigenous peoples often have a special relationship with forests and in many cases have legal rights of ownership and use. Respecting these rights is an important aspect of developing partnerships for financing SFM at the local level.

- Partnerships among different stakeholders are key building blocks for mobilizing SFM finance and implementing SFM. Some stakeholders need assistance and capacity-building support to effectively engage in SFM partnerships.

- Information on SFM financial instruments and opportunities, and better market information need to be available to current and potential producers and investors.

- As protected areas systems have expanded, financing for long-term management has not kept pace. Greater attention should be given to developing sustainable protected area financing plans, drawing on all relevant sources of finance.

- Effective national strategies may also include:

    - National trust or endowment funds to finance non-commercial forest conservation and management activities

    - Access to credit by local communities and small forest-based enterprise

    - Risk management and reduction for investors, including through loan guarantees and ease of movement of capital

- There are a significant number of existing and emerging mechanisms and institutions related to SFM finance, particularly taking into account new and emerging sources related to climate change. This institutional proliferation, however, has not yet translated into tangible increases in SFM financing for many countries and stakeholders. Many participants noted that ODA plays a critical role as a catalyst for other funding.

- Improving the interface between users and providers of financing for SFM is a major priority. A coherent approach at the country-level is a necessary foundation for mobilizing international SFM financing.

- The UNFF and the CPF are urged to increase cooperation to address these opportunities and gaps.

- A comprehensive vision by all players of the current and emerging international financing mechanisms and approaches for forests is critical. The current reality is an increasingly fragmented and duplicative picture of international financing opportunities for actors at all levels. Greater policy coherence is needed among existing and new and emerging forest-related funding mechanisms.

- International funding needs to reach communities and grassroots-level organizations. Current and prospective SFM funding mechanisms and initiatives should be adjusted to improve funding for these locally-based programmes.

- The complexities of accessing international SFM financing mechanisms can be reduced through streamlining institutional processes. More active and consistent application of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness can help in this regard.

- The emerging World Bank Forest Investment Program (FIP) holds great potential to mobilize significant new funding for forest finance. Countries and stakeholders should actively engage in the FIP design process ongoing in 2008-2009.

- There is a compelling need to focus special attention on HFLD countries in the design of REDD financing principles and mechanisms. Although REDD discussions are advancing rapidly, they have not yet taken the position and interests of the HFLD countries in any significant way. The FIP may be well-placed to serve as a financer for HFLD countries, complementing other funds such as the FCPF.

- Communication at all levels was identified as a critical need, with effective coordination and strategic planning between sectors of government at the national level a key component. The UNFF and CPF can play an important role in this regard at the international level, with a focus on implementation of the NLBI.

- CPF's on-line *Sourcebook on Funding for Sustainable Forest Management* can become an important tool for navigating various SFM funding sources and application processes, and to that end it should be strengthened with dedicated human and other resources.

- Forests should not be viewed only as a source of commodities or as units of accounting in carbon finance schemes; rather, their multiple values, goods and services should be taken into account.

- In many regions, the livelihoods, cultures and well-being of forest-dependent peoples are directly and inseparably linked to the integrity of forests.

- A holistic approach to forest sustainability and related financing aspects requires recognition of human rights.

- Indigenous people participation in the UNFF continues to be limited and needs to be strengthened.

- Collective ownership of forest lands and resources by local communities and indigenous people can contribute to SFM.

- The establishment of PES schemes should not result in making the traditional practices of indigenous peoples illegal, or in their forced relocation.

- Indigenous peoples should be active participants in forest-related policy decisions that affect them.

- Financing for SFM should reflect a holistic approach that takes into account the needs, right and contributions of all stakeholders, including indigenous and other forest-dependent peoples.

- UNFF policies and principles for financing SFM should take into account the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

- Direct access to funding and credit by indigenous and local communities should be an element of an international portfolio approach to SFM financing.

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United Nations Forum on Forests
Eighth session
New York, 20 April-1 May 2009
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
Regional and subregional inputs

Letter dated 6 February 2009 from the Permanent Representatives of Australia and Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Missions of Australia and Switzerland to the United Nations have the honour to transmit the enclosed letter from Bruno Oberle, Director of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, and John Talbot, General Manager of the Forestry Branch of the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, as well as the report attached thereto entitled "Australian-Swiss region-led initiative on regional input in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests" (see annex).

In the light of the importance of the report and its relevance to the work of the United Nations, in particular in the environmental field, we would appreciate it if the present letter and the report could be issued as an official document of the eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

(*Signed*) Robert **Hill**
Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Peter **Maurer**
Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations

* E/CN.18/2009/1.

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Annex to the letter dated 6 February 2009 from the Permanent Representatives of Australia and Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Letter dated 2 February 2009 from Bruno Oberle, Director of the Federal Office for the Environment of Switzerland, and John Talbot, General Manager of the Forestry Branch of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry of Australia

We have the honour to inform you that a meeting was held under the Australian-Swiss region-led initiative on regional input in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests from 28 to 30 January 2008 in Geneva.

The specific objectives of the region-led initiative were as follows:

- To raise awareness at the regional and subregional levels concerning the international arrangement on forests and the role and work of the United Nations Forum on Forests, especially its mandate to strengthen interaction between the Forum and regional and subregional mechanisms, institutions, instruments, organizations and processes.
- To inform on the topics identified in the multi-year programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests with a view to sharing regional and subregional perspectives on those topics with the Forum.
- To examine opportunities for and constraints to integrating the planned Forum agenda items into meetings of the regional and subregional processes.
- To identify practical mechanisms and timelines for ensuring that the outputs from regional meetings are submitted to the Forum secretariat and integrated into the Forum sessions, as appropriate, and likewise for enhancing outputs from the global level at the regional level.
- To encourage inputs from forest-related regional and subregional mechanisms, institutions, instruments, organizations and processes to the United Nations Forum on Forests, by sending written focused contributions and/or participating in the sessions of the Forum.

The meeting of the region-led initiative was attended by 49 participants from 31 organizations and countries. Participation was on the basis of invitations to forest-related regional and subregional organizations, members of the Bureau of the eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and selected country experts.

The final report (see enclosure) captures the highlights of the deliberations during the Australian-Swiss region-led initiative on regional input in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests. It will be an important input to the work of the Forum at its eighth session, in April 2009.

We should be grateful if the final report could be issued as an official document of the eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

(*Signed*) John **Talbot**
General Manager
Forestry Branch
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

(*Signed*) Bruno **Oberle**
Director
Federal Office for the Environment

Enclosure

Report of the Australian-Swiss region-led initiative on regional input in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests, Geneva, 28-30 January 2008

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The region-led initiative

1. The region-led initiative, co-hosted by the Governments of Australia and Switzerland, was held in Geneva from 28 to 30 January 2008. It was attended by 49 participants from 31 organizations and countries. Participation was on the basis of invitations to forest-related regional and subregional organizations, members of the Bureau of the eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and selected country experts.

2. The region-led initiative was co-chaired by Sibylle Vermont and Macarthy Oyebo. Two working groups (co-chairs Tony Bartlett and Carlos Aragon and rapporteurs Jerilyn Levi and Abdellah Benmellouk) discussed the following issues drawn from a background paper prepared for the meeting:

- Ways to enhance the integration of topics and matters before the United Nations Forum on Forests into regional meetings.
- Key priorities and challenges of regional bodies and how these link to the topics of the Forum sessions, including any other topic that would need to be added.
- Capacity to influence future deliberations of the Forum (emerging issues, two-way process). What kind of outcome, decision or document from the Forum could contribute to improving sustainable forest management at the regional level.
- Modalities for providing regional input to the Forum (what type of support is required to hold regional meetings to deal with Forum agenda items and for reporting mechanisms to collect and organize input to the Forum?).

3. Discussions at the region-led initiative focused primarily on enhancing contributions of regional and subregional organizations to the Forum, but participants recognized the important role of regional and subregional organizations in facilitating implementation of action at the country level. The issue of country-level actions was not addressed specifically at the region-led initiative, since it was linked to other elements, such as means of implementation, which were to be addressed at the eighth session of the Forum.

Objectives of the region-led initiative

- To raise awareness at the regional and subregional levels concerning the international arrangement on forests and the role and work of the United Nations Forum on Forests, especially its mandate to strengthen interaction between the Forum and regional and subregional mechanisms, institutions, instruments, organizations and processes.
- To inform on the topics identified in the Forum multi-year programme of work with a view to sharing regional and subregional perspectives on these topics with the Forum.
- To examine opportunities for and constraints to integrating the planned Forum agenda items into meetings of the regional and subregional processes.
- To identify practical mechanisms and timelines for ensuring that the outputs from meetings of regional and subregional organizations are submitted to the

Forum secretariat and integrated into the Forum sessions, as appropriate, and likewise for enhancing outputs from the global level at the regional level.

- To encourage inputs from forest-related regional and subregional mechanisms, institutions, instruments, organizations and processes to the Forum, by sending written focused contributions and/or participating in the sessions of the Forum.

Introduction

4. The purpose of the region-led initiative was to promote, stimulate and enhance the contributions and participation of regional and subregional forest-related mechanisms, institutions, instruments, organizations and processes (hereafter referred to as regional and subregional organizations) in the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests, with a view to contributing to enhanced implementation of sustainable forest management. This was in response to States members of the Forum agreeing that there should be a greater interaction between the Forum and the work being carried out by forest-related organizations and processes that operate at the regional and subregional level.

5. Regional and subregional organizations have been invited by the Forum in its resolution 7/1 to address issues and agenda items planned for each Forum session, to provide a concise summary of their deliberations to the Forum secretariat and to contribute to the discussions of Forum sessions.

Background

6. The latter half of the twentieth century saw a marked decline in global forest cover as well as widespread forest degradation. The two ad hoc bodies of the United Nations established to address the problems — the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests — produced a wide range of proposals for action. However, only limited progress resulted on the ground and the problem continued. In 2000, the Economic and Social Council, by its resolution 2000/35, decided that the main objective of the international arrangement on forests was to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forest and strengthen long-term political commitment to that end. In order to achieve the objective and carry out the functions of the international arrangement on forests, the Council established the United Nations Forum on Forests as an intergovernmental body of the Council.

7. Although the establishment of the international arrangement on forests showed new promise for implementing sustainable forest management, the early years of the United Nations Forum on Forests saw global policy dialogue continuing to focus on the same issues without facilitating greater implementation of sustainable forest management. It became clear that a significant strengthening and improvement of the international arrangement on forests was necessary to make it more effective at mobilizing political commitment to sustainable forest management and facilitating action on the ground.

8. In 2006 the international arrangement on forests was strengthened through a new Economic and Social Council resolution, resolution 2006/49, with a new, focused approach to implementing internationally agreed actions aimed at

sustainable forest management. It included four shared global objectives on forests and three new principal functions for the Forum, including one on regional and global interaction. At the seventh session of the Forum, member States reached agreement on the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the new multi-year programme of work. In December 2007, 15 years after the adoption of the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forest (Forest Principles)[1] at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and subsequent discussions on a global approach to protect the world's forests, the United Nations General Assembly adopted this landmark instrument (resolution 62/98, annex). This was the culmination of nearly three years of intense negotiation.

Key priorities and challenges of the regional and subregional organizations

9. The region-led initiative provided an opportunity to share priorities and challenges faced by regional and subregional organizations, looking not only at ways to strengthen interactions with the Forum, but also in implementing sustainable forest management generally. It was clear that while many of these priorities and challenges were commonly shared, the individual nature of forests and the specific economic circumstances and political will of countries within each regional and subregional organization strongly influenced the priorities and operating modalities of each organization.

10. Most regional and subregional organizations already include issues from the Forum's multi-year programme of work on their agendas. However, there may be other discussions on topics associated with thematic issues of the Forum and the timing of these discussions varies.

Key priorities

11. While there was common agreement on the key global forest priorities, the timing and the ways of addressing those priorities were strongly dependent on the needs and capabilities of each region or subregion.

12. The following issues were identified as areas of priority for regional and subregional organizations that were also of priority at the global and national levels (not all of the priorities identified were priorities for every region or subregion, but many were common across organizations):

- Implementation of sustainable forest management
- Capacity-building and information exchange
- Mobilization of all types of financing
- Forests and climate change
- Biofuels and bioenergy

[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex III.

- Biodiversity conservation and protection
- Water and forests
- Combating illegal and unsustainable logging
- Establishing partnerships among all stakeholders: strengthening multisectoral linkages and engagement
- Use and access rights to the forests for local communities
- Trade in forest products and market reforms
- Forest policy and institutional reform
- Protected area management
- Forests and health
- Forest degradation
- Deforestation
- Forests and poverty eradication

Challenges faced in implementation of sustainable forest management

13. The views presented below were expressed by regional and subregional organizations.

14. For implementation at the national, regional and global levels of forest-related commitments, in particular those related to the achievement of the four global objectives on forests:

- Translating high-level policy into action is challenging. It is essential to promote understanding of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and multi-year programme of work to facilitate action at the national level.
- National needs should determine the priorities of regional and subregional organizations and global forums.
- Political will is important to move implementation forward.

15. While most regional and subregional organizations are aware of the multi-year programme of work and the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests, some regional organizations are underinformed of the role and purpose of the Forum.

16. Means of implementation were highlighted as a necessary condition for implementing sustainable forest management, in particular at the national level. Some expressed the need to provide financial resources, transfer of environmentally sound technology, capacity-building, education, research, governance and law enforcement and to explore the potential of a funding mechanism. In that regard:

- Mobilization of resources at all levels and international cooperation, including official development assistance, was considered important.
- Mobilization of national resources was considered important for the establishment of national financing strategies for sustainable forest management. All types of financing options should be explored at the national and international levels for funding sustainable forest management.

17. Regions are diverse — economically, socially and environmentally — which influences discussions of specific regional and subregional organizations.

18. There is a clear need to get forestry issues onto the broader global and national development agendas and to integrate forests into national development plans and strategies. In that regard:

- There is a need to further raise the profile of forestry issues within the United Nations system.
- Better coordination between national focal points on forest-related issues and between decision makers outside the forest sector needs greater attention.

Integration of priorities at all levels

19. Forest-related issues are discussed at global, regional and national levels, often by a number of organizations or forums at each level and often with different focal points or country representatives at each discussion. To avoid duplication and possible conflicting outcomes there is a clear need for better communication, coordination and integration across the global, regional and national levels.

20. Many regional and subregional organizations have already taken steps and made great advances in integrating and coordinating efforts aimed at achieving sustainable forest management. These organizations can provide models to build on and adapt for other regional and subregional organizations. There will never be a "one size fits all" approach, but experience sharing and information exchange between organizations can result in less duplication of efforts and better outcomes at all levels.

21. The views presented below were expressed by regional and subregional organizations.

22. Regional and subregional organizations could consider Forum topics as appropriate, with a view to providing input to the Forum and facilitating the global dialogue.

23. Regional and subregional organizations can raise awareness of Forum outcomes. For example, workshops could be held at the regional level to increase awareness in sustainable forest management policy development and implementation.

24. Information exchange between regional and subregional organizations is beneficial to share experiences and lessons learned.

25. Regional and subregional organizations can play a role in facilitating cross-sectoral information sharing and integrating forest policy into other related policies.

26. Regional topics could be explored jointly at events such as the "forestry weeks" proposed in Asia and the Pacific and Europe and the Puembo initiative, and at meetings of the Central American Commission on Environment and Development, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission, the Near East Forestry Commission and African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (joint meeting) and the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC), all to be held in 2008.

27. Contact points from regional and subregional organizations could facilitate communication and better links with the Forum secretariat.

28. The member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests could make their national and regional focal points known to assist in coordination and communication at the regional and subregional levels. A meeting of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in February 2008 will look at better cooperation and coordination on a number of key forest issues.

Emerging issues

29. A number of issues that were identified as key priorities for regional and subregional organizations were also discussed as potential emerging issues for future sessions of the United Nations Forum on Forests. These included bioenergy and land use change, water and forests and environmental services for mobilization of additional financial resources. The Bureau of the Forum will consider, in consultation with member States, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other stakeholders, any emerging issues for each session of the Forum as stated in section D of the multi-year programme of work of the Forum.

Interaction between the regional and subregional organizations and the United Nations Forum on Forests

30. There is a history of interaction between many regional and subregional organizations and the Forum, but there is also a common agreement that this interaction can be strengthened from both sides and in both directions. There is a strong interest from both the Forum and from regional and subregional organizations to explore steps and actions to achieve this. The region-led initiative provided a useful opportunity for regional and subregional organizations to learn more about the Forum and how it operates, as well as about activities in other regions. Using past experiences and lessons learned, a number of ways were identified to improve interaction between regional and subregional organizations and the Forum.

31. The United Nations Forum on Forests is an intergovernmental body and the participants in the Forum are the official representatives of member States, representing the views and the policies of each one of their respective Governments. Regional and subregional organizations are composed of diverse participants, with a wider range and larger number of forest practitioners and stakeholders present at the regional meetings than at global policy meetings. The composition of participants at the regional meetings compared with the global meetings creates a different dynamic for discussions. It is important to use this first cycle of regional and global meetings and interaction as a learning experience towards promoting greater exchange between the regional and global levels.

How can the United Nations Forum on Forests help the regional and subregional organizations?

32. The views presented below were expressed by regional and subregional organizations.

33. Exchange of information among regional and subregional organizations and knowledge sharing are important issues for capacity-building. In that regard:

- Most regional and subregional organizations have their own information sharing networks but there is no overall global library of information related to regional and subregional organizations.
- The Forum Secretariat could disseminate information and data from relevant regional and subregional organizations through the Forum website, and provide links to their respective sites to facilitate communication and coordination between these entities. For subregional cooperation, the Forum secretariat could offer support by sharing information and contacts.
- The development of an events calendar of planned activities that could be made available on the Forum website could be useful in providing deadlines for submissions and inputs into upcoming Forum sessions (as outlined in the reporting section below).

34. Bringing new activities into the regional sustainable forest management agenda may require additional funding. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests could be asked to consider providing additional support to regional and subregional organizations for better synergies and coordination.

35. There is a need to support national focal points and strengthen capacity-building to enhance communication and harmonization at all levels. This support could be enhanced through coordinated approaches with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

36. There is a need to devote one or two days in sessions of the United Nations Forum on Forests to discussions on regional and subregional dimensions to allow regional and subregional organizations to present their perspectives and information and to share experiences and best practices.

37. The member States of the Forum could organize and support events such as the region-led initiative and side events at other forums to enhance the knowledge and awareness of organizations on the work of the Forum.

How can the regional and subregional organizations help the United Nations Forum on Forests?

38. The views presented below were expressed by regional and subregional organizations.

39. Regional and subregional organizations are aware of the multi-year programme of work and the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests. Most themes and sub-themes are on the agenda of these institutions, and some of them have integrated programmes of work that include themes adopted by the Forum. However, the awareness of how the Forum secretariat and Collaborative Partnership on Forests members work, as well as knowledge of international forest policy decisions, varies at the regional level and could be enhanced through further interaction with the Forum secretariat.

40. Reports from regional and subregional organizations may help to complement national reporting, as few Forum member States submit voluntary country reports. Examples include the report on the *State of Europe's Forests 2007*, prepared jointly

by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the COMIFAC report on progress in sustainable forest management implementation.

41. Regional and subregional organizations could organize activities related to the International Year of Forests to raise public awareness and engage political and public interest in sustainable forest management.

42. Regional and subregional organizations could promote implementation of action towards sustainable forest management at the ground level in member countries, in accordance with their mandates.

43. Regional and subregional organizations could use their technical expertise and experience to contribute to deliberations at Forum sessions.

44. Regional and subregional organizations could provide the Forum secretariat with a timetable and schedule of meetings each year for inclusion on the Forum website.

45. Regional and subregional organizations could undertake collaborative programmes and organize workshops, seminars and side events in conjunction with Forum sessions to share information, seek advice and explore ideas. In that regard:

- Participation in the multi-stakeholder dialogue held as part of the Forum sessions could provide an opportunity for regional and subregional organizations to benefit from the experiences of a range of stakeholders and as a platform to create synergies among all stakeholders.
- Organizing regional and subregional events during Forum sessions could provide an opportunity to transmit regional experiences to other regions.

46. Regional and subregional organizations could provide regular feedback to the Forum on policy development, lessons learned and regional priorities. This input would inform Forum discussions in a manner that could be practical and useful to regional and subregional organizations.

Modalities for input from regional and subregional organizations

47. The views presented below were expressed by regional and subregional organizations.

48. Each region and subregion has a number of regional and subregional processes which result in a variety of methodologies and approaches. One size does not fit all and modalities will vary to best suit each organization. In that regard:

- Each organization has its own mandate, intergovernmental process and priorities which will determine its ability to interact with the Forum.

49. There are valuable experiences from all the regional and subregional organizations that can be used as models or for lessons learned for other regional and subregional organizations. The Forum secretariat could, through its website, share information on regional and subregional organizations and provide links to successful models or examples of interaction and input by regional and subregional organizations into the Forum.

50. Different regional and subregional organizations may need different methods of interaction with the Forum. In that regard:

- An option may be to ask regional and subregional organizations to discuss progress on the global objectives on forests that are relevant to their work.

51. Having regional and subregional preparatory meetings of regional and subregional organizations before Forum sessions could be considered as appropriate and helpful. As an example, the sustainable forest management project I/II put together a technical support team to bring African delegates together prior to the sixth and seventh sessions of the Forum to help African member States contribute to those sessions.

52. Timing is important. Intersessional work should support global meetings, with member States able to discuss issues and ideas at regional and subregional levels in time to provide input into the Forum sessions and to promote closer interaction between regional and subregional organizations and the Forum secretariat.

53. The United Nations Forum on Forests can play a key role in supporting countries in gaining political support for implementing sustainable forest management at the national, regional and global levels.

54. Time should be allocated in Forum sessions specifically for focused discussions related to regional and subregional organizations. This could include interactive panels, which are proposed for the Forum's eighth session.

Reporting

55. Regional and subregional organizations were invited under the multi-year programme of work of the Forum (resolution 7/1, annex, paras. 7 and 8) to address issues and agenda items planned for each session, to provide a concise summary of their deliberations to the Forum secretariat and to contribute to the discussions at Forum sessions.

56. The views presented below were expressed by regional and subregional organizations.

57. There is a need to avoid creating new reporting systems, and utilize existing processes to avoid creating a burden on member States, regional and subregional organizations and the Forum secretariat. In that regard:

- Many participants emphasized the need to avoid overlap and duplication for organizations that have their own programme for reporting to specific Governments and organizations (for example under conventions and to FAO). The Collaborative Partnership on Forests should continue enhancing coordination and cooperation with the forest-related conventions and relevant intergovernmental organizations to get the required information on actions, plans, programmes and measures.

58. FAO expertise, experience and reporting tools such as the Global Forest Resources Assessment and the State of the World's Forests report could be used by the Forum for reporting.

59. Assistance from the Forum may be useful and the development of guidance on reporting to the Forum was suggested by some participants. In that regard:

- A clear timeline showing reporting deadlines for input into Forum sessions could also be developed by the Forum secretariat and made available.

60. The need to strengthen and streamline reporting mechanisms on the state of forests in all regional and subregional organizations of the world was highlighted. FAO and other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests could take the lead in assisting regional and subregional organizations with technical assistance and capacity-building.

Conclusion

61. This region-led initiative provided an excellent opportunity to exchange information and ensure closer interaction at all levels.

62. The region-led initiative explored and highlighted several benefits from enhanced regional interaction.

63. Participants voiced their interest in working together to make progress on sustainable forest management globally.

64. Participants expressed their gratitude to the Governments of Australia and Switzerland for organizing the region-led initiative and encouraged other countries and regional and subregional organizations to organize future such initiatives.